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ABSTRACT

As part of a panel on rural education, Dr. Edgar M. Easley spoke on the topic "Urban-Rural Education - Relieving the Tension". Based on findings from literature of adult migration to urban areas, Dr. Easley stated the following implications for adult education teachers and administrators: (1) that the tension found in rural migrants related to adult education is personal, and in great measure attitudinal; (2) there are four areas in which tension can be reduced: curriculum, counseling, social interaction, and support services; (3) studies indicated much of the beliefs about rural-urban transition is myth or half-truths; (4) more data is available on comparisons of rural and urban blacks than other ethnic groups; (5) implications can be drawn from the data relative to program planning; (6) some data is inconclusive and does not provide a definite answer to questions posed; (7) the key to relieving the tension in rural migrants is adaptation, rather than novel or segregated programs for rural migrants; (8) administrative concerns do not appear to be as important as instructional concerns; and (9) future studies should investigate the following areas of concern: curriculum, reliable tests and measurements, transfer of skills programs, and self-esteem enhancement. (Author/CT)

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URBAN-RURAL EDUCATION
"RELIEVING THE TENSION"

Panel on Rural Education

National Association of Public Continuing Adult Education

Portland, Oregon

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URBAN-RURAL EDUCATION

RELIEVING THE TENSION

The movement of population has been a characteristic of America life from the beginning. The frontier; Greeley's "Go West, Young Man", the development of the inner cities after World Was II, and today the rapid emergence of the Sunbelt, attest to the high mobility of the American people. Through all of American history there has been a stream of persons moving from the rural scene to the urban complexes beckoning for labor. It is true today that the migration also moves away from the urban centers and an emergent facet of the national scene is "back to nature ". The rural-urban has been a source of tension in adult education reducing the educational potential of adults sorely in need of assistance in making a smoth transition. This tension has reduced what I call "the adult education potential" of the migrants.

How can this tension be described? It is the belief of teachers, administrators, social power brokers (social workers, employment counselors, etc.) that rural migrants possess few skills and are in need of massive doses of education. This is true in many cases and to deny the need for basic skills would fly in the face of truth. Yet, conversely the rural migrants often rejects adult education programs because of a feeling that those coping and survival skills he/she possess are ignored or deprecated. This tension is one of lack of assessment and appreciation of student skills and lack of ability to translate existent skills to a new setting. Reducing this tension will increase the participation of rural migrants in adult education programs.

There are four major areas in which this tension canbe reduced: Curriculum, counseling, social interaction, and support services. Each of these

areas holds great promise for reducing this tension and of increasing the potential for increased attendance in programs. If one accepts the principle of marginality and combines with it the finding from the APL studies, it is easy to see that many of the rural migrants need some measure of help in moving into the functional, coping urban society. This is a far cry from the attitude often seen in teachers and administrators that the new students are helpless, ineffectual, and lacking in elementary or basic skills. These attitudes create barriers and hamper effective teaching/learning. If learning is the prime objective of adult education, then that which aids learning is of prime importance.

First, a look at research primarily done at Texas A & M College under the leadership of William P. Kuvlesky has pointed out some important factors relative to the patterns of life that migrants to the urban centers possess. Much of this relates to the Black exodus from the rural South to both Northern and Southern cities. Other studies describe the Chicano and white migration and from these studies an emergent body of knowledge makes its appearance.

> Venegas and Kuvlesky reported in 1975 that among Chicano youths, the rural youth had a strong drive to seek education as a means of reaching their personal aspirations, while the urban Chicano youth tended to have higher educational and vocational aspirations.
>
> Implication: The migrant Chicano has a high drive to seek adult education as a factor in both increased income and social acceptance.
>
> In 1966, in the annual meeting of the Rural Sociological Society in Miama Beach, Florida, Kuvlesky and Ohlendorf reported that amoung Blacks, urban persons have high occupational goals and strong desires to reach those goals. There is not this significant factor in the reporting of rural Blacks.

Implication: Counseling needs to present expanded occupational areas to migrant Blacks, especially to avoid falling into a trap of entering unstable and marginal occupations. Occupational goals need sharp definition. (see below)

By 1972 the same group reported that Black male youth had narrowed the gap in occupational goals so they were high both in rural and urban areas. Thedifferences seem to be more apparent in Black female youths (Texas A & M, 1972).

Implication: See previous implication.

This six year period highlighted a tendency toward more homo - geneity in occupational goals.

In 1970, ABT Associates in "Causes of Rural to Urban Migration of the Poor" reported that the chief cause for urban migration was economic, often tied to local agricultural displacement. The secondary cause was the city viewed as having better housing and educational opportunity.

Implication: The rural migrant desires adult education that leads to employment and thus vocational type programs have the highest "adult education potential" for migrant.

In 1976 in a study done by Kentucky University Department of Sociology which showed that when 5,500 licensed drivers were asked what they saw as a primary educational need the reponse was vocational education.

Implication: See above implication.

By 1977, in a sutdy of rural areas of West Central Minnesota, it was found that rural students in adult education were concerned with non-credit personal development, were usually below 40 years of age, and women; urban patterns were credit-type courses, under 40 years of age, and men.

Implication: Urban adult education need look to more varied and open learning type courses and beam them toward the female population that views adult education as more than credits toward a diploma. This does not contradict the previous statement for the respondents were not migrants.

What can be done in the area of curriculum to ease the migrant's sense of strangeness in the urban setting and thus increase his or her adult education potential? The key is adaptation. A good deal of the content in reading skills and computational needs fulfillment can be adaped to circumstances familiar to the student. Remember, the migrant may have been functionally competent in his precious surroundings, but be he not, he will still learn faster by starting with the familiar. This is not a license to patronize, nor is it a caveat to ignore the real needs of the urban world. It is an evident statement that one moves from the known to the unknown in terms of examples, practices and demonstrations. Years age we learned that adults learn by assimilating new facts to previous experiences.

Look at a practical example - Map reading. Take a map of a rural area, show the interstates, state highways, subsidiary roads; describe traffic flow, devise routes to use. Now, move this to a map of the urban neighborhood. Illustrate the same features: principal streets, side streets, shopping center, routes to use. This reduces the feeling that the city is a strange, forbidding place, Point out that the city may be different in quantity of roads, but the concept of mobility in an environment applies equally as well in both settings.

The above example could apply in other areas: shopping (Math), town meeting - City Council (government), bales of hay - bundles of lanundry (vocabulary) and so forth.

Returning to studies of rural-urban migration, other findings give clues for relieving the tension and anxiety.

(5) In 1977, A3T Associates reported in a study done in Massachusetts that values and attitudes were quite similar in rural and urban youths a year after graduation from high school.

Implication: Guidance activities for rural migrants need not presume a diffuse personal base With TV and mass media many values are quite homogeneous, through some differences may be found. (see above Ohio study)

(4) In 1973, it was reported the Southern Agricultural Worker's Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, that when rural persons in Texas were queried as to where they would <u>like</u> to migrante, they responded that areas of about the same population size as where they presently reside were preferred. In addition, it was found that older persons showed more satisfaction in migrating and that renters were far more inclined to migrate than landholders.

Implication: I am not sure what implication to draw from this data, but I have a feeling that there is more needed to be known about what communities are "magnets" and the source of their drawing power. Possibly, this is a desire not to make too radical a shift in environment and social grouping.

(3) "Rural-Urban Differences: Myth or Reality", published by the Ohio Agricultural Reasearch Development Center in 1973 noted that when looking for attitudinal and socio-economic characteristics of rural and urban persons and using a Likert Scale, urban and rural place of domicile <u>did</u> make a difference on a micro scale basic (small indicators or specific indicators), but not on a macro basic (large or global in indicators).

Implication: More needs to be said of this study for it seems to indicate that a number of factors are important that may not be apparent in a general discussion of attitudes. Care should be taken not to generalize.

(2) In 1973, in a paper given to the Rural Sociological Society at College Park, Maryland, it was reported that 25% of the rural population would want to live in the urban core, but 50% would prefer living in an area within commuting distance of the urban centers. This is in general agreement with the paper mentioned later, given in Atlanta, in that it shows the less densely populated areas as having a high drawing pottential for rural persons.

Implications: I am not sure what implications can be drawn, but it appears that there is a need to develop centers for migrants in these "fringe" areas.

(1) In 1971, "Educational Aspirations in Minnesota", published by Minnesota University at St. Paul, noted little differnce in aspirations of rural and urban students when viewed by intelligence, rank, size of community, size of school, or preceived satisfactions with life.

Implication: Rural and urban people are more alike than dissimilar, especially in terms of general attitudes and aspirations and group socio-economic behavior so that they need not be treated as strange and socially different.

These implications have much value to counselors and teachers in re-examining their prejudices about rural "folk". It becomes clear that the homogeneity of American life has prevaded the rural environment. Adult education counselors will need to remember that the rural migrant often has a degree of workly sophistication for which they are not given credit. " You people", "Where you came from", etc. are to be abandoned.

It would seem the proper frame for counseling would be:

What skills do you now possess that are transferable to jobs in the new location?

What new skills do you wish to add to your present personal skills bank? (Make an inventory)

Are you aware of other occupational areas open to you?

By what name or DOT classification can we rename your present skills in your job search?

Data has given some interesting clues for increasing social interaction and reducing tension in the migrant.

(3) Kuvlesky reported in 1972 that urban Blacks were more aware and cognizant of racial prejudice than rural Blacks.

Implication: Rural Blacks entering adult education programs do not necessarily bring negative attitudes towards programs, either to white administrators or intergrated classrooms.

(4) In 1973 in Rural-Urban Value Pattern", it was found that urband and rural persons have no significant cultural differences, now was there any apparent major divergence in a scale from "conservative to liberal" in placement.

Implication: Beliefs that rural persons are naturally conservative and urban populations are liberal are myths. Withness the strength of racist and hate groups in metropolitan areas, as well as the long line of liberal Congressmen elected in the"Farm Belts". Adult educators should realize that social issues are as important to rural migrants, possibly more some than their city brothers and surely there is no wide gap of "cultural disadvantages".

What cultural differences exist seem to be spread over both rural and urban population.

(1) In 1971, Kentucky University in "Poverty and Life Satisfaction" reported that urban poor who have migrated showed greater satisfaction with their new surroundings and in general the migrating poor showed greatest and satisfaction with the social environment and the least with their self images.

Implication: Bonds of social interaction are built easily between "newcomers" and urban "residents". Often churches, jobs and clubs are composed of persons who earlier migrated from the same area. This leads to ease of social assimilation. In fact, it was reported that one precinct in west side Chicago contained a large number of persons from the same county in Mississippi. Adult educators can utilize these social networks in introducing their program to new residents.

(2) Kuvlesky reported in 1971 that both urban and rural black male youths adoped role models from "glamour" figures, also rural black female youths also chose "glamour" figures (i.e., Diana Ross), but urban female black youths chose teachers as role nodels. In all four groups significant family persons were role models.

Implication: The family is an important source of raising the adult education potential of migrants, and involve this with media, sports and community leaders to make the program attractive, Radio testimonials of musical groups, athletes, gospel presentations and "pacesetters" will provide role models when they are actively involved in adult education programming and direction. They should not be "used" just to attract students and them prevented from giving positive direction to a program. Do that once and you'll never get them out again.

The whole realm of social interaction is important to the rural person who has derived much satisfaction in life from associations with friends and neighbors. Capitalize on this for program development.

At one adult center I utilizes a "Juneteenth Day" clebration with language arts, and produced a day long activity capitalizing on rural backgrounds to teach city "folk". We had food and printed menus, an assembly with the re-enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation being brought to Beaumont, Texas writings of imaginary persons role-playing their emotions on that day. This was culminated in a dance in the auditorium with the students wearing work clothes. Many of the city-bred students were intrigued and pleased with the contribution made by the other students.

What might be found relative to support service needs of rural migrants to the urban center?

(1) Flossie M. Byrd reported in 1971 at the Baton Rouge, Lousisana meeting of the Rural Sociological Society that in both rural and urban samples there was a low degree of perceived disability reported and the pattern showed no consistent trends relative to education, income, or occupation of either migrants or urban groups.

Implication: The rural migrant does not bring any more need for support services to the adult educator than his city counterpart. In addition, there is no way in which disability can be generalized. It has to be taken on "a case by case basis". It is a mistake to characterize the rural migrant as casting any undue burdens on the employment office, psychological or testing services, or social services. Another word is necessary relative to what is "disability". Here it was what the respondent perceived as a physical barrier to work.

(2) Clinton J. Humbolt, in a doctoral dissertation for Walden University in 1972 put forth the thesis that vocational-technical programs would not provide solutions to broad educational problems in a rural type junior college.

Implication: To negate the viewpoint that the reverse of the previous implication is valid, rural migrants do need support services, as do

urban students. To deny these services only increases the tension and anxiety. Humbolt described social service as a needed component of rural junior college education.

(4) In a paper given in 1975 to the Rural Sociological Society at San Francisco, California, it was noted that there was little evidence that proved "the extended family" was any greater support to rural persons than urban residents.

Implication: The rural student entering adult education programs has as much need of support services as anyone else and to rely on an unknown "extended family " to provide these services is to cheat him of valuable assistance.

(3) A national five year longitudinal sutdy showed that black youths educated in the inner city had substantially less mean earnings that peers educated in the rural South, Texas A & M University, September, 1973.

Implication: Need for support services (job finding, medical, and housing assistance, consumer protection assistance, transportation) are no more an indication of lack of ability to enter productive work in rural migrants than in city students. Futhermore, ofter rural persons have been in gainful employment and possess work attitudes at their time of arrival. Possibly all they need is to have additional skills added to presently held skills.

It would seem that a good deal of support service should be directed to all adult education students; however, administrators should not use as an excuse for failure to work with and educate rural migrants either lack of funds for support services, or the heavy burdent that rural persons put on their programs, This self-serving behavior only heightens the tension.

As a conclusion let us look to the future of rural-urban migration The inner cities are rapidly filling up and Census data shows that large percentages of rural migrants are moving to the suburbs. This them brings for the need to reassess the kinds of programs offered in suburban adult

education programs. Possibly a greater danger lies here than in the inner city, for those programs may possess even more insularity and bias toward rural migrants than large city programs which have had some experience with migrants, be it good or bad. Edwards and DePass in Economic Research Service, December, 1971, predicted that by the year 2000, rural migration to the large cities will dwindle to a trickle as rural productivity rises. This will be a function of higher rural income, not a determined strategy for limiting out-migrantion. The see 8.8 million new jobs being created in the rural sector, of which 3.7 million will be shifted from the urban sector. Until this time comes, however, the urban-suburban sector will still attract a large number of rural migrants. When it does happen, possibly another paper will be written on relieving the tension of urban migrants to the rural areas. At the present, there is a need to provide adult education in meaningful terms to rural migrants and a parallel need to provide adult education in the rural areas. Kraenzel reported in 1971 to the Rural Sociological Society at its Denver, Colorado meeting that the structure of programming aids in migration in that voluntarism and poorly supported programs in the area of social service and education tend to force the unfortunate, aged, ill and handicapped to migrate to cities to find assistance, This can be remedied in part by extensions of social service programs to an on-going basis in rural areas.

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SUMMARY

1. The author believes that the tension found in rural migrants related to adult education is personal, and in great measure attitudinal.
2. There are four areas in which tension can be reduced: curriculum, counseling, social interaction, and support services.
3. Studies indicate much of the beliefs about rural-urban transition is myth or half-truths.
4. More data is available on comparisons of rural and urban Backs than other ethnic groups.
5. Implications can be drawn from the data relative to program planning.
6. Some data is inconclusive and does not provide a definit answer to question posed.
7. The key to relieving the tension in rural migrants is adaptation, rather than novel or sergregated programs for rural migrants.
8. Administrative concerns do not appear to be as important as instructional concerns.
9. Future studies should investigate the following areas: curriculum areas of concern reliable tests and measurements, transfer of skills programs, and self-esteem enhancement.

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